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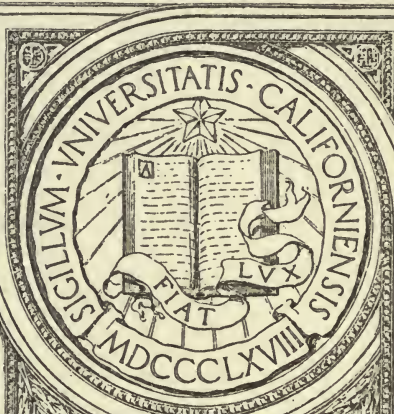


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DAVID
AND
BATHSHEBA
SALLY BRUCE KINSOLVING

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DAVID AND BATH-SHEBA

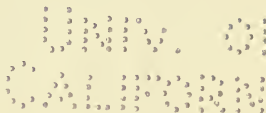
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Depths and Shallows, \$1.50

The Norman, Remington Co.

DAVID AND BATH-SHEBA

AND OTHER POEMS



BY
SALLY BRUCE KINSOLVING

BALTIMORE
THE NORMAN, REMINGTON COMPANY
1922

[illegible]

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Published October 1922

*I wish to thank the editors of Poetry,
The Reviewer, The New York Sun,
and The Baltimore American for their
permission to include in this volume
the verse which has already appeared
in those publications.*

S. B. K.

To

A. B. K.

*"Who shall end my dream's confusion?
Life is a loom weaving illusion. . . ."*

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PART I

DAVID AND BATH-SHEBA

DAVID AND BATH-SHEBA

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DAVID, *King of Israel and Judah.*

JOAB, *Captain of the Host.*

URIAH, *the Hittite.*

NATHAN, *the Prophet.*

BATH-SHEBA, *the wife of Uriah.*

Soldiers, Messengers, Servants.

DAVID AND BATH-SHEBA.

PROLOGUE

Joab stands talking with a soldier.

Joab

Ah, wherefore does the King now tarry. . . .

He has not deigned to enter his council chamber,

Although his captains are still there assembled
In order to devise a plan to check
The enemies of Israel and Judah.

Soldier

I do not know, my lord, where we may find him.

Three dawns have spent their fires and worn to
evening,

And yet we have not seen him. . . .

Joab (gazing tensely at the speaker)

And do you not suspect that some strange fever
Has attacked his brain to cause him to forget
The danger that assails us?

Soldier

Again

My lord, I do not know, but I have seen
At times a distant look within his eyes
Like that the early morning oft bestows
Upon the sea, and though it is apart
From my familiar wont at any hour
To spy upon his Majesty, the King,
While keeping watch alone, I found him
troubled
In his sleep and calling more than once
Upon the name Bath-sheba.

Joab (looking up in a startled manner)

Pray tell me

Who is she?

Soldier

The fair young wife, my lord,
Of Uriah, the Hittite.

Joab

I know her not,

And therefore bid you to impart to me
All knowledge you may have of her.

Soldier

Her father

Gave her hand in marriage to Uriah,
According to the habit of our land,
Ere she beheld him; and I attended
Once of late upon my lord the King
When first he sat at supper with Uriah—
And as within the silent, hushed blue night,
When suddenly appearing over Hermon,
The full-moon rises in her majesty—
There, with veil thrown back, in pallid beauty
Stood Bath-sheba. . . . I saw the King
Start . . . like a man upon the watch
When some strange light breaks forth
Upon his vision. His eyes sought hers
And when they met, two streams, I knew,
Were lost within each other. She brought him
Meat and drink, and though he had not broken
Fast since morning, he scarcely seemed
To see that food was set before him,
But looked like one within a dream. . . .

Joab

Ay then,

Though not according to the way I thought,
It is a fever that assails his mind.
It is a subtle madness seizing upon life
That causes one to forget all else—
Duty—even God Himself. It is a mist
Like that which creeps along the purling
streams

Through greening meadows in the early spring
When willow boughs are tinged with tawny gold,
While through the low and overhanging clouds
The sun bursts forth with soft enthralling radiance.

It is the stir within the pulse behind all life—
Its essence and its poetry. . . .

And yet at times with wild unrest it shakes
The sure foundations of our being, and seethes
With strange conflicting currents in the blood.
If such a madness has beset the King,
It is for me to plan the downfall of his enemies.
Then let us be about our duty. . . .
The King will tarry at Jerusalem.

[The curtain rises as they leave the stage.]

The scene is a roof of the King's palace, furnished only with a couch and arms nearby. David, the King, reclines upon the couch. The time is near midnight.

David (slowly rising)

I know not why this tumult ploughs my brain.
My limbs are weary, yet I cannot sleep.
So new is night she hardly has had time
To cool the parched earth. Could I but lose
Myself in dreams, then I might wake at dawn
To stem the tide of battle with my men.

[He sinks back upon his couch, but rises again almost immediately.]

I barely lay my head upon my couch
Ere I behold a vision of such beauty

I fain would give the sleep of all the years
For but one kiss upon her scarlet lips—
If only I might crush her body's self
Within my hungry arms. . . .

[He walks to and fro with head bowed.]

Oh God, am I

Thy servant David, who can forget
Thy mercy and Thy loving kindness, and all
The wealth and power Thou hast given me—
Or am I now no longer my true self?
Two wills contend within me for mastery,
Like wrestlers on a plain. . . . Wives
Thou hast bestowed upon me, and yet
They have no mind wherewith to meet my own;
And when I think upon Bath-sheba,
I see the dawn lifting her beauty from behind
The hills that stand about Jerusalem,
Spreading her radiance over all the sea,
And bringing in the splendor of new day. . . .
For when her eyes meet mine, they sink so deep
Into my soul they find my inmost self,
And raise me up to heaven's gate with ecstasy.
And am I not the King of Thine appointing,
With power to fulfill my will? Once
I was a shepherd-lad, content with morning
And all the freshness of the dew-wet day—
Watching my sheep beside the clean bright
streams
And listening to the song of birds. . . .
Weary at noon beneath the sun's hot rays,
Yet satisfied to slake my thirst in water,

And to appease my hunger with coarse bread;
Heavy with slumber when the darkest night
Rested upon the hills, and startled only
Into wakefulness at some unearthly cry
Of bold attacking beast. From this contentment

Thou hast taken me to wear a crown,
And surely Thou wouldst not deny me more
Than all my kingdom and my wealth—ay, more
Than life itself. It is a part, Bath-sheba,
Of fate's malicious trickery to have given you
To another, but you are mine alone,
And I am now impelled to claim you.

[He ascends a turret to look toward the house of Uriah, the Hittite, and at that moment the moon escaping from a cloud reveals Bath-sheba upon the roof of her husband's house.]

The moon withdraws the curtains of the night,
And with a sudden burst of glory
Enables me to see you from afar,
Bath-sheba. . . .

[He hastens forth eagerly.]

[The stage is darkened for a few moments until there appears as the second scene the roof of the house of Uriah. White oleanders are growing in large pots near a couch where Bath-Sheba is reclining, attired in filmy drapery with a violet robe lightly thrown over her. Beyond stands a marble basin carved

*like a lotus flower with an ewer resting
beside it. The time is shortly after
midnight.*

*Bath-sheba (slowly rising from her couch, with her
hands behind her head)*

It is so warm tonight I cannot sleep,
And while the moon is veiling the watchful stars
With silver, I'll dip into the whiteness
Of my marble bath. . . .

*[She walks forward and gazes dreamily out
into the night.]*

Why should I think
Upon the King—treasuring each look and word
That he has given me, finding delight
In each one separately, yet counting all
Together like rubies in a necklace
Until they press too heavily upon me,
Burning me with their passion and their color.
Since that night we met, in thought I dwell
Upon him every moment. . . . Then it
seemed

As if some strange enthralling power had seized
me,
And had brought me face to face with all
That I had been or ever might become,
For in his eyes I knew that I had found
My end of being. . . . I am possessed
With thought of him alone who is my life.
Has he yet gone to battle, and does he tent
Under these midnight skies that are so wan

With all the lovely palor of the moon?
Can it be tomorrow's sun will stain the earth
With blood?

[She shudders.]

My God—not his, not his!

*[She approaches the marble basin and
pours water into it.]*

Listen to the cooling water trickling
As from a stream on Lebanon.

[She partly unrobes.]

How white

And fair my limbs are in the moonlight.

*[Startled at the noise of footsteps she turns
suddenly.]*

What sound is that I hear!

(in terror)

Behold the shadow

Of a man!

[She seizes the violet robe.]

The voice of David

Bath-sheba!

*Bath-sheba (with head thrown back and eyes half-
closed, breathing heavily)*

Ah, what music

Stole upon the night to call my name. . . .

[The King draws near.]

David

It is I—the King.

[He takes Bath-sheba's hands into his.]

Bath-sheba (anxiously)

My lord—and wherefore
Have you come?

David (holding her at arm's length)

To admire your loveliness. Do you
Not know that all my heart goes out in craving
To possess you? You are my own, Bath-sheba.

*Bath-sheba (breaking away from him and turning
her head aside)*

My lord, do you forget my husband?

David (bending over her passionately)

He is but my servant, and you are mine
At will.

Bath-sheba

Yet he is good and kind to me,
My lord, and I have loved to serve him,
As he to serve the King.

David

And have you then
No love for me?

Bath-sheba (with a sob)

My lord. . . .

David

Do you not see
That far up in the heavens the moon

Has cast aside the mantle that protected her,
And reigns effulgent over all the night?
Henceforward shall you share my throne, my
life.

Bath-sheba, do you not love me?

*[He draws her closer to him. She trembles
in his arms, closing her eyes and resting
her head upon his breast.]*

Bath-sheba

It is heaven to rest here. . . .
I am so much alone, and now the music
Of your voice steals over all my being.
It is so strange, so new—it seems to me
As if I were another. Your breath
Upon my cheek is like the incense of the night,
And in your arms my heart finds peace in-
effable.

David

Do you not call this love?

Bath-sheba

I know not love—
I only know that I would have this moment
Last forever.

David

Call it by what name you will,
But when two souls are lost within each other,
High-pinnacled upon a giddy height of time,

It is such love as poets dream of endlessly
From age to age.

[They stand within a long embrace.]

*The stage is again darkened, and then the third scene,
an apartment in the King's palace, appears.
An interval of several months has elapsed since
the last scene. David, the King, is sitting upon
his throne while a messenger kneels before him.
The light of sunset falls across the floor.*

David (waving his hand)

Depart—I wish to be alone. . . .

[The messenger bows and leaves the room.]

*The King bends forward, letting his
head fall into his hands.*

With child—Bath-sheba now with child—my
own. . . .

[He looks up suddenly.]

But what of Uriah since I have summoned him
From war?

*[He rises and rings, whereupon a mes-
senger enters and makes obeisance.]*

David

Bring Uriah, the Hittite,
Into my presence.

[The messenger bows and departs.]

If I might only
Rid my soul of one I hate. . . .

[Uriah enters the room.]

Uriah (bowing before the King)

My lord the King. . . .

David

Arise and give

The news you bring. How fares my captain,
Joab,

And the people? And does the war yet
prosper?

Uriah

So thick and fast your questions come, my lord,
They are like arrows from our enemies.

Our captain, Joab, still commands the battle,
And though the lurid sun leaves nightly a trail
Of blood upon the field, we yet outnumber
All our enemies. The war still prospers.

David

Oh, may the God of battles now be praised
For tidings such as these—and yet, Uriah,
I know that you must be all worn and weary
With the fray. I do beseech you
To go to your own house to seek refreshment
And the subtle peace that can subdue
All warriors at the end of day. I bade
My servants follow you with snow-cooled
wine—

And food—the best my palace offers.

Uriah

O King,

I thank you, but I would rather far
Return unto the field of battle. . . .

David (in angry amazement)

Have you forgot your wife . . . and all
The sweet allurements of your home?

Uriah

I have,

My lord, for while the Ark and Israel
And Judah abide in tents and are encamped
Within the open fields—even your captain,
Joab, and all the servants of my lord—
Shall I alone go into my house, and eat
And drink, and take my wife into my arms?
As we both live, I will not do this thing.

David (bowing his head for a moment, recovers himself looking up suddenly)

Then tarry here tomorrow and the next day.
You may at least refresh your limbs with meat
And drink, and rest your soul from battle. . . .
(addressing his servants)

Seek food and wine, and give this man
The portion due a giant.

[*The servants bow assent before the King.
Uriah salutes him, and withdraws, followed by the two servants.*]

David (alone and musing)

I wear a crown, Uriah, while you were born
To serve me—and yet you tower so far above
me
In lonely majesty of spirit, I count myself
As but a stone upon the plain of Jordan,

And you, the crest of Mount Moriah's height.
Yet ruled by some strange force. . .
Older than tides or even barren hills,
And more mysterious. . . I am compelled
To claim you as my own, Bath-sheba.
I must, therefore, devise some means to rid me
Of this man who stands between us, and checks
My royal will. Perchance the fate of battle
May end my problem. I will write
To Joab, my trusted captain, to place
Uriah in the thick of fight, for surely
Now he is indifferent to all else,
And thus at least may end his life with glory.

*[He rises, seizes parchment and pen, and
begins to write.]*

David (reading aloud)

Unto Joab, the Captain of the Hosts
Of Israel and Judah: Set Uriah
In the forefront of the hottest battle,
And retire from him, that he may soon be
smitten,
And then die.

[He bows his head.]

Can I, the King, even David—
Forget so soon all that I owe my people?
Can this be murder?

[He shudders.]

Unto what ends
Does passion drive her slaves, despite the crowns
They wear in their mock majesty!

The stage is darkened once more, and then the same apartment in the King's palace after a week's interval appears as the fourth scene. The King again is sitting upon his throne. A servant is in attendance upon him. The time is noon.

David (anxiously)

And have you not yet seen the smallest speck
Upon the dim horizon's line betokening
A message from the war?

Servant

Not I, my lord—
But hark—I think that I now hear the cheering
Of men's voices.

*[A messenger enters, falling breathlessly
before the King.]*

David (rising)

What news?

Messenger

For three long days,
My lord, the battle has raged furiously.
So close we were upon the city's wall,
A woman let a mill-stone fall upon Abimelech,
The son of Jerubbesheth, and crushed him
there
To earth as if he were an ant. . . .
Uriah too is dead.

David (bending forward eagerly)

Dead! Ah, say to Joab,
"Let not this thing displease you, for the sword
Devours one as well as another, but make
Your battle still more strong against the city,
And overthrow it," and thus encourage him.
And now depart, and send to me the wife
Of this dead chieftain that I may break
These tidings unto her. . . .

[The King is left alone.]

David (musing)

My dreams are all fulfilled, Uriah slain,
His wife my own, and now, O God, to crown
My high ambition, Thou mayest send to us
A son. A King's will is supreme—
Yet were I but a shepherd-lad again,
With Bath-sheba, my cup of joy
Would still be running over. . . .

[He walks slowly up and down with head bowed.]

For then we would abide in fields of night,
And wonder at the wisdom of the stars,
And when your beauty stirred with dawn's
first light,
I should forget the shadows and the scars
That life and battle give, which now despite
My happiness, unwillingly I remember.
Then we would roam in dewy meadows, white
With blossoming, in gaiety together,
Seeking the food that heaven alone should
send—

Fresh pomegranates and the grape's unvintaged
wine—

Until the passionate warm day would end
In golden vapor with the sun's decline,
And melt in filmy maze of pale moonbeams,
When we should find the day's joy in our dreams.

[The King starts.]

But hark, here comes Bath-sheba.

[Bath-sheba enters, followed by a servant.]

The King motions to the latter to depart.

Bath-sheba (bowing before the King)

My Lord,

The King. . . .

David (gently)

I have news to shock you.

Arm yourself to bear it.

Bath-sheba (looking up anxiously)

My lord. . . .

David

Uriah, your husband, has fallen

In the fight.

Bath-sheba

Oh, no, my lord. . . .

It cannot be. . . .

*[She falls upon her knees, and buries her
head in the cushions of the couch. The
King kneels beside her, bending over her.]*

Bath-sheba (sobbing violently)

And I unfaithful
To him. . . . In bitterness of soul
I now must reap my sin. Ah, had I been
But true to him, I might have given myself—
A stainless wife—to you.

David

Do not reproach
Yourself, Bath-sheba. You had no will
Apart from mine, and you are yet as pure
In my own eyes as that fair snow that rests—
Not only in the bitter cold of winter,
But even under a raging summer sun—
Upon the lonely heights of Hermon. . . .
My passion could not stain nor melt your
purity,
My love—my wife. At last you are my own,
And now by day and night, henceforth, I know
That I may hold you in my arms and press
Your lips to mine without the thin black
shadow
Of another's wrath to come between us.
I love you with such passion, the mountain-bars
Of all the earth could never part us.
Only death might seem to separate us
For a while—one from the other—
But on an April night when I should see
The moon slip quietly out of her blackened robe
Full-lined with silver, then I should know
That from the courts of heaven Bath-sheba
Was shedding radiance over me. . . .

Bath-sheba

Speak not of death, my lord—I cannot bear it.

[He lifts her up and takes her into his arms]

David

My own Bath-sheba. But hark—who dares
To come into this chamber.

[Nathan, the Prophet, enters making no obeisance to the King. The King releases Bath-sheba from his embrace. She falls upon the floor beside the couch and rests her head upon her hand in a listening attitude.]

David (with astonishment)

Nathan!

Is it you—and wherefore have you come?

Nathan (sternly)

As the messenger of Jehovah, Lord of Lords
And King of Kings.

David

And the tidings that you bear?

[The King ascends his throne and Nathan stands before him.]

Nathan

There once were two men dwelling in one city.
In flocks and herds the one was rich, the other
Poor—and only had one small ewe lamb,
Which he had bought and nourished. And
then there came

A traveller by that way, and he who was so rich
Still spared to take of his own flock, and seized
The poor man's lamb to dress it for the way-
farer.

*[The King rises in anger. Bath-sheba
draws near to him.]*

David

As the Lord lives, the man that did this thing
Shall surely die.

Nathan

You are the man.

[David bows his head.]

Nathan

Why have you so despised the Lord your God
To do this evil in his sight, for with the sword
You know full well that you have killed Uriah,
And have taken his wife to be your own. . . .
The sword, therefore, shall not depart from you,
Nor from your house. "For though thou didst
it secretly,"

Saith the Lord, "This thing I now will do
Before all Israel and Judah."

*[The King kneels before the Prophet.
Bath-sheba holds out her arms yearn-
ingly towards him.]*

David

I have sinned against the Lord. . . .

Nathan

The Lord has put away your sin. . . .
You shall not die, yet since by your own sin
You now have caused the enemies of Israel
To blaspheme, your son shall surely die.

*[Nathan departs, while the King falls
prostrate burying his head in his arms
upon the dais of his throne. Bath-
sheba kneels beside him, and bends
helplessly over him.]*

David

Against Thee only have I sinned,
And done this evil in Thy sight.
Have mercy upon me, O God
And blot out my transgression. . . .

Curtain.

PART II

THREADS OF GOSSAMER

*I have no gift but song
To give you,
And it is fashioned frail as dew
Upon some pale sweet-scented flower,
Or rain-drops
Caught within an hour
In silver threads of gossamer.*

ADVENTURE

I have been soaring upon the backs of young
eagles
Over high mountain-tops,
Looking down upon the broad, unknown reaches
Of the world.

I have been shattered and storm-beaten
Like white petals of spent roses
After summer rain.

I have been caught up and burned
In the zig-zag of forked lightning
Against the dun sky.

I have fallen down the night with a meteor,
And choking with star-dust,
I have been lost in unlimited space.

I have been dreaming at the heart of a flower
When gold pollen fell into it
From the gauzy wings of a bee. . . .

I have been reading the poetry of the young.

ONCE

Once I would have given you
With spendthrift recklessness
All the strong red wine that youth pours out,
But I have now
Only the spirit's garnered loveliness
From springs and autumns that are gone,
And the radiant light
The great white ship of Truth
Leaves in her wake
Upon the seas of life. . . .
But youth has no such gentleness
As I have to bestow upon you.
The airs of morning lack the veiling mist
That comes but when the slanting sun has kissed
The purple hills.
With thought of self
Youth fills the fleeting hours
And spills in wantonness
Her bruised red flowers,
While I would shield you from all weariness,
Sending your cares away
Like swallows on the wind
At end of day.

THE CROSSWAYS

I am standing at the crossways
And looking down the lane;
Before me beckons pleasure
But I see her shadow pain.

The autumn sun is dancing
Upon the crimson leaves,
And I hear the west-wind calling
Out among the sheaves.

I am standing at the crossways
And looking down the lane—
Before me beckons pleasure
But I see her shadow pain.

TAPESTRY

Like a rich tapestry
Days I spent with you
Dwell in my memory.

Caught in its warp and woof
Each moment stands aloof
Bringing back joy to me.

First of its colors are
Eyes that I knew
Were piercing me through and through
With light from afar;

And there are the words
That tremble and start
Like tropical birds
In the flower of my heart;

And then the clear full tone
Of your deep voice alone
Reading me poetry,
Leaving an impress rare
As that in color where
Art has burned beauty. . . .

Like a rich tapestry
Days I have spent with you
Dwell in my memory.

TRUTH

Can day deny the sun on his return,
When morning splinters light to silver on the sea,
Or night deny the clear-eyed stars and spurn
Their age-long message of reality?

COLOR

Stretch out
Your wild impetuous arms to me,
Autumn,
And draw me
Into the heart of your colors.

Let me swoon
With the stupor
Of your red wine
In my blood.

Give me
The desperately sweet ripe smell
Of your golden apples
Falling to the ground.

Warm me
With your throbbing sunlight,
And steep me in mellow radiance,
That I may forget
The sharp and cruel winds of winter
That will soon sever my soul
From your passionate beauty.

IF YOU SHOULD DIE

If you should die tonight,
Could I take up the threads
Of life,
And weave them into bright gay-colored images,
Or should I wander blindly
As one who treads
Through thickly-falling snow,
Without a light
To beckon,
Or home wherein to go?

“A CHARTERED BORROWER”

A chartered borrower I would be
Of age-long beauty and of wizardry:
The light of Helen's eyes that brought
Such woe to men, wrought
By the will of Zeus;
The call of ancient seas to Odysseus;
Music that fell from Sappho's lips
As magical water drips
From moonlit fountains; even the spell that
Cleopatra's
Turbid passions cast upon Mark Antony;
Love like Paola's and Francesca's,
Or that for Abelard of Héloïse. . . .
Sumptuous fabrics such as these
Of imperishable lore
I would now weave with rich embroideries
Out of my own heart's endless store
Into recurrent, haunting melodies
Singing the restless beauty of your eyes.

AS THE WIND

I think of you as the wind
On a March day
When white clouds are racing
In giant play.

I think of you as the sea,
Fierce, unfathomable, bold;
Mighty to overcome—
Strong to enfold.

I think of you as morning—
Dazzling in purity—white
As an arch-angel's robe
In endless light. . . .

A WORD

I would not have you tell me
That you love me—
But do not be afraid
To send me some quickened word
Out of your depth of being,
That while not seeing
You,
It may beat against the casement of my heart,
Like an ardent bird
That has suddenly made me start
In the night
With the flutter of its wings
Beating against my shutter ere it sings
With dawn's first light.

PLAINT

My heart is worn and sad tonight
To think it must grow old,
For though it quivers with delight
When April hesitant and white,
Weaves daffodils of gold—
Alas, it trembles now with fright
And shivers in the cold—
My heart is worn and sad tonight
To think it must grow old.

IF I COULD KNOW

If I could know you loved me,
Would it be
As if the snows of yesterday
Had cooled the airs of memory
And wrapped me in a stillness as of morn
When winter's light is born?

Or instead
Should I be lifted
As on wings of storm
Against a summer sky,
When suddenly
From underneath black cloud
Flame bursts with proud
And passionate ecstasy—
If I could know you loved me?

HEART-BREAK

The lean moon shrouds the chill dead day,
The spent leaves lie on the earth's cold bed;
The laughter of summer has melted away,
And hope from a woman's heart has fled.

CHALICES

I have drunk of beauty out of many a cup. . . .

I have drained the strong new wine of April to
the lees

When she shatters the old bottles of old trees;

I have stained my lips with purple from mid-
summer seas,

And sipped the golden honey of sun and bloom
with bees.

I have quaffed the deep red splendor of October
noons,

And slaked my thirst with silver from thin har-
vest moons;

I have been benumbed from winter's crystal
chalice

Held in white forests by cup-bearers clad in ice.

I have drunk of beauty out of many a cup. . . .

DECEMBER NIGHT

O little quiet sheltered room
Safe from winter's hostile gloom,
Your shaded lights around me glow
Upon the books I love and know—
On sculptured beauty born of Greece,
On Dante's mediaeval peace,
On Botticelli, Giotto,
Buonarotti, Sanzio;
On English lakes and college-halls
With lace-work gates and stately walls;
On flowered lanes in fragrant Devon—
On church-towers pointing up to heaven;
On fir-tree from some forest far
Lighted with the Christmas star;
Upon red-berried holly wreath
And lily-buds in bursting sheath;
On pussy-willows wont to fling
Their soft arms out to welcome spring;
On green downs painted by the sea,
On pale sweet branching bay-berry;
On ferns from out some woodland deep
Where birds were singing love to sleep;
On lovely shadows of the night
Penciling in grey and white
The century old hand-carven door,
While Persian colors warm the floor—
You are a place of shot and gleam,
Of silent thought, enchanted dream,
O little quiet sheltered room
Safe from winter's hostile gloom.

SNOW

With delicate fingers
The soft and treacherous snow
Now wraps each twig and leaf and stem
Within a pall of silence
And of death—

But in my heart
There is the joyful tumult
Of ten thousand silver bells
In the music-shaken trees
Of a summer dawn.

WHEN YOU GO AWAY

When you go away
Then I enter your room,
And suddenly
A faint and lingering scent
Of cigarettes
Stabs me,
Like the perfume of bruised violets
In the quiet gloom
Of twilight, and I begin to look
Around me and I see
A book
That is open on its face
In the place
Where you laid it,
And I find ashes still scattered on the floor,
And my heart beats faster when I remember
That before you left
I loved to kneel and brush them out of the way,
Because I knew that you had spilled them
And would spill more. . . .
And then I look into the mirror until it seems
As empty as a house of dreams,
Or the white-pillowed bed where recently you lay,
And I shut the door
Quietly—
And go away.

PLANETS

On windless nights the planets burn
 Their message in the sky,
Without a single star to spurn
 Their lonely majesty;

But I forbear then even to trace
 Their pathway up on high,
Ashamed to look them in the face—
 So slight a thing am I.

LAMPLIGHT

Your voice, your lips, your eyes
All come before me now—
Ah, would that I might rest
My hand upon your brow.

Night would not seem so dark
Nor day so long,
For hours would beat to music
As words to song;

And even the lamplit shadows
Would steal across my heart
As softly as the south-wind
Stirring the leaves apart—

While words too lightly cadenced
For aught but poetry
Would burn themselves forever
Into my memory.

SILENCE

Like snow
That is falling softly
Round a lonely house
At midnight,
Your silence smothers me.

Your words
That I have treasured
Have grown tenuous and thin
With repetition,
And are like the pale uncertain blue light
Of a candle
In a darkened room,
Where I shiver alone
In the cold.

BEAUTY WALKS ABROAD

Beauty walks abroad to-night
Under the dark fir-trees,
Garmented with silvery white
Draperies;

While with a scimitar of light
Cutting the clear blue sky,
The moon declares her infinite
Majesty. . . .

But what do I care for the face of night,
Glittering and cold to see—
Would that your own instead might
Bend over me.

WOUNDED

I have stript my heart
In what I have said,
And now it is shrinking
Like a wounded thing that's fled

Into a quiet covert
Of a deep ferny place,
Where shadows lie heavily,
Giving the sun no space;

And where there is silence
At noon or with night falling—
But oh, to hear you
Calling, calling.

THE ROAD

The road I travel has no ending—
By flower and thorn it winds its way;
I know not whither it is tending,
And darkness soon must end the day.

Yet when I see the farthest star
Shine through the dim blue night,
I sometimes think perchance there are
Meadows whereto it leads with bright

Unclouded skies—where it is spring
The long years through,
And in that lovely far-off blossoming
I may again find you.

UNREST

Would that my heart were like a well
That I might see down deep into it,
And finding dross there,
Might drag it into the upper air,
Leaving its waters
Limpid and clear. . . .

But instead
It is like a wave
That is struggling to be free,
And to cast upon the strand
The burden it has brought
From the deep and troubled sea—

Sea-weed that holds light
Like a drowned woman's hair,
Or spars that are broken
By the ocean's mere ecstasy.

Would that my heart were like a well. . . .

FLOOD-TIDE

Your life is like a current
Swift and smooth and strong,
Flowing between happy vales along
Unconsciously
Upon its highway
To the sea;

And shall I break
Upon it with the torrent
Of my song—
Heedless of right or wrong—
Passionately,
Driven by a force more strong
Than death,
And stronger than the breath
Of life in spring
When bare woods wake
To blossoming?

Your life is like a current
Swift and strong—
And shall I break
Upon it with the torrent
Of my song?

What though the sky
Be paling in the west,
Morning is breaking into color
In my breast—
Morning and heaven's awakening:

And were your heart
As cold and still
As aisles of ice
In dark and lonely forests,
Where pine-trees shake
In winter winds
Their crystal dice,
Like long lean-fingered fates
At play
Upon the chance of life—

Ah, were you cold and still
As aisles of ice,
The crimson rose of dawn
Within my heart
Would beat with blood-red throb
Beneath your breast,
Burning the icy stillness
Of your rest
Into ecstasy.

WINTER TWILIGHT

When winter twilight comes upon the city,
I see blue gentians
Blooming beside deep pools
Near dark forests,
And pink and purple iris
Flowering in June gardens.

I see great stars
One by one in wide skies
Over pale deserts,
With molten silver gleaming under tall
palm-trees.

I see mad waters swirling in swift eddies
Over sharp stones
In great swelling torrents
Down steep mountain-sides . . .

When winter twilight comes upon the city.

ANGUISH

Pain is cutting through my heart,
Like a thin knife,
With the keen abiding smart
Men call life.

Pillowed cool in marble state,
Ah, let me sleep,
And afar from love or hate,
Bury me deep.

UNHEARD

Like the keys
Of old spinets
Once given to music,
Or the trees
In apple-orchards where linnets
Sing in cool wet April dawns,
That are now mute and unheard—
So is my song.

I must be silent
As the hushed moment
When the round sun
Slips quietly
Over the rim of the far horizon
Into the sea—

Since you are lost
What song is left to me?

LONELINESS

My soul is sighing with the winds
That search the winter plain,
Remembering that poppies there
Once burned the golden grain.

She walks the furrowed fields of snow
As ghostly clad as they,
And in the stark and lonely night
Dreams of the sub-robed day.

She peers into a forest where
No live thing is astir,
And shivering she falls asleep
Under a frosted fir.

FEBRUARY

Upon the black wet earth
I walk
While I listen
To the talk
Of birds that breast
The icy wind
Their timid friends
Have left behind—

And though
There is no burgeoning,
Nor any bird
That dares to sing,
Gold willow-wands
Bespeak the spring,
And point
Their magic sceptres to
A patch of sky
As clear and blue
As any late
For-get-me-not
Half-hidden
In a mossy spot. . . .

And while the snow
Trips over hills
As lightly as a child
That fills
Her lap in June

With daisies,
Sudden vivid green
Amazes
Eyes forlorn
And city-spent
From seeing beauty scorned,
Or rent
By the many ugly scars
Wherewith man
His progress mars:

Thus in the hovering
Moment when
Mad swelling streams
Divide the glen,
And winter cleaves the year
With spring,
I lift my surging heart
And sing.

YOU AND I

You are like the hoar-frost
That comes in winter's train,
Cut in stars of crystal
On the window pane—

And I am like a garden
Wet with summer rain,
With flowers broken on their stems
That will not lift again.

WHEN SPRING RETURNS

When spring returns
Upon the wind,
And blue-birds dart
About the sky,
Then I shall sing
Right merrily.

When willows change
Their gold to green,
And maple-trees
With burning tips
Press silver clouds
Like lovers' lips,

And yellow dandelions play
With wanton grasses
Through the day—

Then more glad
Then field or tree
My very inmost heart will be—

When spring returns
Upon the wind.

SCOURGE

Life, I would forget you if I could,
For you have cut and bruised me
On your sharp grey stones
When I have dared to dash upon you
In a sea of dreams.
You rattle in my mind
Like dead men's bones
Sepulchred in a sea-chest
That is pounded by the surge,
When you lash me
With the scourge
Of memory.

CONTRAST

You are like an arrow
That is straight and true—
I am but a summer wind
That would have shaken you.

Curved the bow yet taut the string
That drives you toward your mark—
While like a bird on broken wing
I tremble in the dark.

MY THOUGHT

My thought leans out to you
Far in the still blue
Night, as a birch-tree
Bends over a stream.

Have you forgotten me,
Or can you still see
My face bending over you
Out of the still blue
Night, as in dream?

Whisper your love to me—
Breathe it to flower or tree,
Rain-drop or sunlit gleam;
My thought bends over you—
Life is a dream.

A FOREST

My heart is like a forest,
With hidden recesses
And secret places,
Where you alone
Have found the way. . . .

MIST

Thought, why do you burn me
As the street-lamps burn the mists
Of evening
When they press
Their hot red fingers
On the tear-wet cheeks of day—
Will you not let me forget?
Make me secure in loneliness,
And wrap me
With the mist
That wraps the hills,
That I may be
As cold and grey,

SUMMER STARS

Love and peace can never dwell
Side by side,
For peace is like the snow that fell
At Christmastide,

And love is but a torch that burns
And scars—
Trembling with red and blue by turns
Like summer stars.

DO YOU WONDER

Do you wonder that I sing
Of spring's returning—
Of forest and of star
And of all things that are
Compact of beauty
And of yearning?

For though I may not yet find peace
Within the strong
And uncurbed passion of my song,
My soul at least may sing
As the waves sing—
Or swing through space
As planets swing—
In harmony
With moonlit tides and spring,
High-hearted, free, alone and proud.

FORGIVEN

Like the touch of fur
Upon my cheek
Is the thought that your love
Is mine to keep.

My heart is as warm
And soft in my breast
As a ring-dove asleep
In her soft warm nest;

And I am as calm
And as full of peace
As the midnight snow
That is falling like fleece.

DOMINOES

As up and down the world I go
I wear a colored domino,

And in passing should you ask
Why it is I wear a mask,

I would answer, "Would you show
To others all your joy or woe?"

In the world as at a ball
Or midnight frolic one and all—

Dressed in blue or black or rose—
Are wearing colored dominoes.

PRELUDE

Spring tells her secrets to the night
As she stands at winter's gate,
Young and trembling, wan and white,
All too prone to hesitate
Now to claim her royal state.

Over evening hills she tripped
By enticing airs beguiled,
Young and warm, and rosy-lipped,
Slim and naked as a child,
With eyes as blue and wild:

And she begs of winter room
Where she yet may rest unseen,
While her weavers at their loom
Fashion her bright robe of green,
Flecked with threads of silver sheen.

Spring tells her secret to the night,
Young and trembling, wan and white.

WHAT IS TIME

What is time—
What is space?

Time, the hours
That interlace
To hide from me
Your face.

What is space
But a pathway
Made of steel,
Where the turning
Of a wheel
Carries burning
Word for word
To a distant place.

What is time—
What is space?

WILD-GEESE

Lift up your eyes
And you will see
Wild-geese flying
Over pale grey skies—
Like souls of the winds
Alive and free—
Lift up your eyes
And you will see.

Lift up your heart
To the young spring night,
And she will open
Her own to you—
Like a dark blue flower
Stabbed with light—
Lift up your heart
To the young spring night.

A CLOSED BOOK

Life lies between us
Like a closed book. . . .
Yet its polished surface
Is satin to the touch,
And the scent of its leather
As the breath of roses
On a June night.

MARCH WIND

Unsheathed from its scabbard
The keen blade of the March wind
Is searching the bare branches
Of the silver beech-trees.
Velvet moss is wrapping the chill wet earth
As with a blanket.
The grey sky leans heavily
Upon the strong shoulders of the steel-blue hills.
Flashing between the mottled white and tan
Of tall sycamores,
A turbulent stream plunges madly—
Cutting the pale thin green of the meadow.
Tawny buds in feathery fountains
Are breaking with delicate grace
The sharp outline and hard color
Of the steep ridges. . . .
What is there in the austere beauty
Of the young spring—
Cold and pure and expectant—
That tears me with an agony of aching,
And sends my heart searching
With the hunger of the March wind?

AT TIMES

At times it is a lonely chord—
A strange and lovely haunting word,
Or flash of color that may bring
You back as if on level wing.

Again a moon that cleaves the dark
May serve as your returning bark—
For with all sudden quick delight
You come to me by day or night.

DAFFODILS

Daffodils are knocking
At spring's closed door,
Impatient of their waiting
To carpet her floor.

Rude winds of winter,
Stop your rough blowing,
And give the yellow daffodils
Their spring showing.

Woo them April sunshine—
Kiss them silver rain—
Welcome all their blossoming
To the earth again.

WIZARDRY

Love came to me out of the shadow
On hushed and stealthy feet,
But his face was like the morning,
And his eyes were wild and sweet.

He led me across the meadows,
And over the silver streams,
Into a place of silent stars
And quiet dreams.

He gave me no food or raiment,
Nor wreaths to bind my hair,
But he wove thin veils of amethyst
My spirit might wear.

He pressed a lute into my hands,
And bade me then to sing—
But in that place of silence
I waited listening.

I heard the noiseless footprints
That fall upon new snow,
And even the sigh of April
When blossoms blow. . . .

Love came to me out of the shadow
On hushed and stealthy feet,
But his face was like the morning,
And his eyes were wild and sweet.

THE CALL

I shall go out
To meet the spring
Where secret woods
Are blossoming,
And turn my back
On life and duty,
That I may keep
My tryst with beauty.

My tryst with beauty
I must keep,
To save my sluggard soul
From sleep,
Lest I should fail
To mark each thing
That trembles in
The lap of spring.

Then in the lap of spring
I'll lie,
While small birds flit
About the sky,
And listen to
Their heralding,
With pagan joy,
The wild sweet spring.

I shall go out
To meet the spring
Where secret woods
Are blossoming.

APRIL

I—PURSUIT

I have followed you
Through the long year,
April,
To find you here
In this beech-wood,
With your green kirtle
Spread on the hillside,
While you dip
Into a silver stream.

Must you ever ensnare me
With your shy girlhood,
And are you not fair enough
Without tangling your tawny hair with violets?

Why do you still
Elude me
When I seek to enfold you,
Turning your face northward as you trip
At twilight
Over a misty hill?

II—AFTER RAIN

Light is tremulous again
After the fresh spring rain,
While numberless little secret buds,

Embroidered in silvery gauze
And infinitely whorled,
Are breaking into fragrance.

The passionate purple stain
Of judas-trees
Protests in vain
Against the whiteness—
The inviolate bloom—
Of dogwood.

The hills are splashed with golden broom,
And blue violets are wedded to pale crocuses
In the cool wet April grass,
While in the windless air
A thrush sings
Of bridals and of blossomings.

Can this be Eden here,
With Eve hidden
Under some sweet-scented rain-drenched apple-
bough?

For but a moment now ago
I marvelled to see
A sleek and indolent serpent—
Subtle, malevolent—
Pass beside me,
Gliding warily through tall grass.

III—PURPLE

Strip that purple scarf off, April,
That you wind so tightly round my heart.
Is it not enough that you come to us
Trailing your garments of green and silver—
Tearing our hearts into shreds
With your young beauty?
Why must you wound us
With the color of grapes
That belong to your sister, autumn?
Strip that purple scarf off, April.

IV—I HAVE NOT LOST YOU

I have not lost you yet,
April,
For you are still drawing your thin veils
Around your bare young limbs,
To shield them
From the cold air.

Dogwood is weaving pearls
Into your bright hair,
While you tread carelessly upon violets,
Lifting your proud head into the skies—

And I hear music
Still trembling on your lip in dreams
In silver harmonies
Of gurgling streams. . . .

I have not lost you yet,
April.

SPRING VOICES

Ole Mr. Frog got a mighty fine note—
Mr. Whip-poor-will sing wid a sob in his throat—
But it gives me fear in de dark to hear
Mr. Owl holler out, "Who-o-o, who-o-o, who-o-o?"
An' I say, "Mr. Owl, howdy you do?"
But he holler out again
Jus' "Who-o-o, who-o-o, who-o-o,?"
An' I say right quick,

**"Jim Jones an' his wife
Wuz at my house las' night,
An' Gord knows who-all
Wuz at my house las' night."*

Mr. Frog call out from de edge o' de pond—
Mr. Whip-poor-will, he mighty soon to respond—
But it gives me fear in de dark to hear
Mr. Owl holler out, "Who-o-o, who-o-o, who-o-o?"
An' I say, "Mr. Owl, its me an' you,"
But he holler out again, "Who-o-o, who-o-o,
who-o-o?"

An' I say right quick,
*"Jim Jones an' his wife
Wuz at my house las' night,
An' Gord knows who-all
Wuz at my house las' night."*

** This refrain is a fragment of a negro folk-song given to the author by an old slave, who recalled having heard it sung in her youth on a Virginian plantation.*

An' Mr. Frog he say dat he don' know,
An' Mr. Whip-poor-will holler, "Dat ain' so."
But it gives me fear in de dark to hear
Mr. Owl holler out, "Who-o-o, who-o-o, who-o-o?"
An' I say, "Mr. Owl, t'ain' nobody but you,"
An' den I sneeze, "Ker-ketch-er-koo!"
An' I run right quick, 'cause

*Jim Jones an' his wife
Wuz at my house las' night,
An' Gord knows who-all
Wuz at my house las' night."*

WORDS ARE TOO TATTERED

Words are too tattered and thin
To tell my love for you—

I could paint it in April sunsets
Caught in a mesh of silver laces
In the boughs of young trees,
Or in gardens that are stained with poppies.

I could sing it in the rhythm of high seas
Breaking upon sounding beaches,
Or be silent as snow
That is softer than fleece—

Words are too tattered and thin
To tell my love for you.

SEARCH

I have hunted you down the garden-path
Out in the soft spring rain,
And under the lovely starlit sky
I have looked for you long in vain.

But I know that you are as far from me
As a star at the heaven's height,
That is fixed forever immovably
In the changing tides of night.

GIVING

I gave to him a blood-red rose
But he gave it back to me—
It pierced my finger with its thorn
Till I wept bitterly.

I gave to him a white rose—
As white as it was fair—
He hid it from me in his heart,
But I have found it there.

GHOSTS

I am not the I you think I am—
Nor you the you.
We marked the flight with the naked eye
Of a bird that flew
Across the sky,
But not its hue—
We heard it cry—
Ah, that is true,
But it sang no song as it passed us by
To sparkle down the blue;
Its color and flame we never knew. . . .
I am not the I you think I am—
Nor you the you.

MIRRORS

I

Alone as a child in tall grasses
Under mimosas blossoming,
Languorous from their sweet scent—
As of peaches grown ripe in the sun—
With only a cat-bird's complaint
Piercing the midsummer silence,
Or the wiry monotonous chanting of jar-flies,
I lived in a golden web of dreams,
With magic to touch all my thought
With light and the hot breath of noon.

II

Again indoors from a window
I gazed at the buff-coated green
Of the sumptuous leaves of magnolias,
With their soft and velvety petals
Spilling pale fragrance from chalices
Of lovely and waxen white bloom;
Or through the shimmering veils of heat
At the yellowing fields of grain,
Where color was wont to run riot
In a tangle of poppies and larkspur.

III

At times on the edge of old forests
I shared in the cool luscious melons,
Pink at their hearts as crêpe-myrtles,

That were offered on tables of stone—
Not by Druidical priests,
But by laughing and merry sweet girls
To youths beguiled by their beauty.

IV

Then I can remember all my savage joy
When the thunder pealed
And the lightning stunned,
And rivers of rain were pouring
In passionate pelting storm,
And I marvelled to see
The iron-hooped barrels of water
Caught from my dreamland the clouds.

V

There were roses at sunset in gardens
Afterwards, brimming with rain-drops
And sweetness, dropping their petals
Like carpets for fairies to dance on.

VI

But drawing the heart of a child
More than beauty was the cow-pen at twilight
With its strong warm smell of the stalls,
And the black women milking the udders
That streamed with their plentiful whiteness;
Or the dairy as deep as a dungeon

And dank with the stain of stone walls,
Where dusky girls balancing milk-pails
Were lithe as young caryatides
Bearing the weight of carved capitals;
Or pouring out cream as if nectar,
Where butter was blooming like flowers
In rose-patted circles of gold.

VII

Then evening fell deep in the low-grounds
By willow-grown banks of the river—
Tawny and sluggish and baffling—
Gliding between the tall rows
Of corn in voluptuous beauty,
While frogs sang loudly in chorus
In the rank and weed-scented dusk
To the far-away plantation harmony
Of a negro alone in the twilight,
Returning from work at the end of
His long and arduous day,
Where under the pointed black cedars
Many a comrade lay sleeping—
There in the shadows of evening—
In graves that would ever be nameless.

VIII

Yet fairest of all was the moonlight
From under the tall Gothic arches,
With their slender columns of marble

Tripp'ed like birch-boles in forests;
Moonlight falling on roadways
Winding and white under oak-trees
Or evergreens—cedars of Lebanon—
Black in the summer-night shadows,
While valleys were pale with the mystical
Maze that the moon was still weaving,
Trailing her silvery gauze,
And drenching the world with her beauty. . . .

I lived in a crystal globe of dreams,
With magic to touch all my thought.

THE SEA

I—Downs

I would have you walk with me
Over the green downs to the sea;
I would wait and watch with you
The white sails flit across the blue;
I would see the young gulls flying,
And my heart would be replying
To their freedom and their ecstasy
Because you were alone with me.

I would hear the cattle lowing
And the south-wind softly blowing;
I would watch the evening sky
Clothe herself in majesty;
I would hear the doves' faint cooing
In their plaintive twilight wooing—
As in old dead days of Greece,
By her beating azure seas.

II—FOREBODING

Evening is slowly creeping across the sea;
The waiting beach
Receives into her lap
The little tired home-returning waves;
The golden rocks are barnacled with infinite life;
Sea-weed is strewn untidily upon the sand;
So was it yesterday and yesterday—
So will it be tomorrow
When sorrow
And I are far away.

III—LIKE SHIPS

Hearts are like ships
Pulling at the ropes
That hold them
To their moorings—
Straining to be free.

IV—RHYTHM

Why should I go alone beside the sea
In search of peace—
Where sound may never cease—
But that I feel my heritage to be
Part of her age-long rhythm and her unity;
And that she by right of her imperious word
May still the voices that are stirred
Deep in my soul continually,
Making them one
With her great diapason
Of infinite harmony. . . .

V—A MOMENT

White cloud, white foam
And dark blue sea;
Grey-veined sand
The tide leaves
When it drifts;
Winds that shift suddenly
Blowing strong and free—

A child with lips
As scarlet as a marsh-lily
Dipped in white spray,
And eyes as blue
As lapis-lazuli.

VI—MOORING

O ship now anchored in light
With all of your voyaging done,
Calm on a grey-blue sea
Under a copper sun,
And sails as closely furled
As the bright petals upcurled
Of a sleeping flower—
Within this quiet hour
You whisper rest
To all who are oppressed
With the unquenchable fire
Of infinite desire. . . .

VII—THE BEACH

When I go out alone
On the beach
In the morning,
I see cleanliness, stript and naked,
Lying on the firm wet sand,
And light glittering
With ten thousand swords
Flashing in cross-play.

And when I watch the waves withdrawing—
Trailing their veils of foam
Like brides of the sea—
In shining mirrors
I find Nausicaa,
Shell-pink and white,
With gold hair wind-blown,
Poised and curved like a lily-flower,
Spreading her garments to dry
In the quivering path of the sun.

VIII—ISLAND FOG

The fog is drifting slowly
From the sea,
While on my ear there falls
The sound of bell-buoys
Tolling mournfully—
Now soft, now loud—
As unto souls
Of mariners lost at sea;
Whose bodies lie
Upon the sea's cold bed,
Wrapped from head
To foot each in a shroud
Of sea-moss
Green and pink
As scale and flesh
Of mermaids,
Who forever dwell

In jewelled caverns
Of the deep,
And wait to greet
The ships that sink—
To dive within their hold
For precious stones
And coin of treasured gold. . . .

And as the bell-buoy
Tolls and tolls,
I seem to see
The souls
Of mariners
Clothed in mystery,
Coming from phantom ships
New-beached upon the sand
Of their once familiar island—
With silent lips,
Yet yearning to repeat
Their tragic history—
Haunting deep wells
Of fragrance in the island dells,
Near lonely cottages
Where women weep
Upon their knees,
While children as they hearken
To the bell,
Bow their heads together,
And whisper to each other
The sad sea-tales
Their fathers used to tell. . . .

The fog is drifting slowly
From the sea,
While on my ear there falls
The sound of bell-buoys.
Tolling mournfully.

SONNETS

I

I walked serenely over trodden ways,
Warmed by kind suns and soothed by quiet
 moons,
Like one in happy trance who often swoons
With pure contentment in the drowsy days;
Fragile as wind-flowers trembling in a maze
Of dreams, the hours achieved, and distant noons,
Fainter than through lake-mist, the cry of loons,
Or siren-calls from ships on lonely bays.

Then out of some remote empyrean plane
One lifted me to heaven and high stars,
Yet borne by wings too trammelled to maintain
That giddy place beyond all mortal bars,
Far down the night I fell to earth again,
Broken and bruised and wounded with deep scars.

II

When I am with you I have learned to skim
Over life's surface: there I am bound
By trivial rules men make that hedge me round
And voices whispering within the rim
Of my own soul's horizon; in that dim
Demesne even as I falter I have found
Reason and will true potentates are crowned,
Though bare of breast, naked and lean of limb.

But in a realm apart from all of these,
Where spirit soon with spirit dares to speak,
Flame leaps to flame in meeting eyes; the worth
Of truth then proves its ancient power to break
Each barrier, making us one with hills and seas
And stars, and all the old beauty of the earth.

III

I weigh my heart in scales of right and wrong,
Like merchandise: for as the wind drives bloom
In autumn sunlight through an infinite room
Of clear blue space, you drive my thoughts along
The highways of the mind with might as strong,
Dispelling every questioning cloud of gloom
And haunting fear of far impending doom,
Scattering my words like petals into song.

Yet in my deepest consciousness I know,
White are the flowers of love that I now bring
To you—white as a mantle of new snow
Or blossoms from the altars of young spring;
Fair as the altar-bread to one who sips
Red sacramental wine with trembling lips.

IV

Wounded with beauty in this quiet hour
Beside a limpid pool I muse alone—
No twilight bell could bring to me the tone
Of your clear voice more silverly, with a dower

Of roses prodigal of scent and flower
As those in Persian gardens long since blown,
And yet like spectres faded woes are prone
To haunt the summer dusk with latent power.

But truth that stalks beside me stark and bold
Taunts me with sorrow that is sharp and new
As morning, cutting like frost in cold
December: the years beyond are few—
Futile the rose of love I give to you—
Separate in doom, apart we must grow old.

A VALLEY

Life is a lonely valley
Where beauty walks with tears
Within a hush of silence
Like that of quiet spheres—

Until she sings in rushes,
Wind-stirred beside a stream,
Yielding her soul to music
Born of a golden dream.

SUMMER NIGHT

As I came through that lane of honeysuckle
In the summer night
Where no sound stirred,
Suddenly
I thought I heard
A hundred voices calling your name
Through all the sweet, warm dark—
Burning it into my brain and heart—
Can it be
That honeysuckle
Has tongues of flame?

WHAT IS SPRING

What is spring to me
But you?
What is summer—
What is autumn—
What is winter?

You sing to me
In every note
From every misty tree
In April;

And when moonlight presses
Upon the heart of a rose
In a June garden,
It quivers like my own
When you are near.

It is your voice
That I hear
When autumn
Treads out color
As from a winepress;

And when snow
Muffles sound
With a silence
That can be heard,
It is your unspoken word.

What is spring to me
But you?
What is summer—
What is autumn—
What is winter?

ASPIRATION

With stars I climb
 The lonely night—
I ride the sun
 To the morning's height.

I search the gardens
 Of the sea
For flowers that bloom
 Continually.

I talk to the winds
 From the ocean-plain—
I hear the secrets
 Of April rain:

But joy of joys—
 I strive as I can
To lose myself
 In the heart of man.

THORNS

What are these sharp thorns
That you give to me, Beauty?
Will you not let me wear your purple flowers
Without pain?
Would you have me return again
To the dusty street
Of life,
With noise insistent and loud,
To be jostled once more by the crowd—
I who have lain
At your feet
By pools
That are still and deep?

It is your voice that cools
My hot thirst,
And leads me to choose
Even the pain
Of wounds that will not heal
Rather than feel
I may lose you
Out of my life again. . . .

Ah, give me your sharp thorns, Beauty.

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